Name: _____ Date: _____

Winter Rye Covers the Bare Field

Circle group

After the corn is picked, a field can look finished. The stalks are cut. The soil is bare. But some farmers do one more job before winter. They scatter the seeds of a cover crop. It is often a grass called rye. They do not plan to sell it.

Bare soil is easy to lose. Heavy rain can wash it downhill. Strong wind can blow away the dry top layer. Soil takes a very long time to form, so losing it is a big problem. Rye sprouts fast in cool weather. Its roots spread like a net and hold the soil in place.

The green leaves help too. They shade the ground in spring, so weeds have a harder time sprouting. Rye can keep growing slowly in the cold when most plants have stopped.

Before the next crop is planted, the farmer cuts the rye or turns it under with a plow. As the plants rot, they add organic matter to the soil. This feeds the tiny creatures there. It also helps the ground hold water like a sponge.

A cover crop costs seed and work. Many farmers think it is worth it. It protects the most valuable thing on the farm, the soil.

Questions

1. What is a cover crop?

_____

_____

2. What can happen to bare soil?

_____

_____

3. How do rye roots protect the soil?

_____

_____

4. How do the green leaves help in spring?

_____

_____

5. Why does a farmer turn the rye under before planting?

_____

_____

6. Why do many farmers think a cover crop is worth the cost?

_____

_____

Words to know

cover crop: a plant grown to protect the soil, not to be sold
sprouts: begins to grow from a seed
organic matter: rotted plant and animal material in the soil
plow: a farm tool that cuts and turns over the soil

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Winter Rye Covers the Bare Field

Triangle group

After the corn is harvested, a field can look finished, with the stalks cut and the soil left bare. Some farmers, however, complete one more important job before winter arrives. They scatter the seeds of a cover crop, often a grass called rye, which they never plan to sell.

Bare soil is easily lost, because heavy rain can wash it downhill and strong wind can blow the dry top layer away. Soil takes an extremely long time to form, so losing it is a serious problem for any farm. Rye sprouts quickly in cool weather, and its roots spread through the ground like a net that holds the soil in place.

The green leaves help, too. They shade the ground in spring, which makes it harder for weeds to sprout. Rye can keep growing slowly through a cold season when most plants have stopped.

Before the next crop is planted, the farmer cuts the rye or turns it under with a plow. As the plants rot, they add organic matter to the soil. That material feeds the tiny creatures living there and helps the ground hold water like a sponge.

A cover crop costs seed and work, so a farmer must plan for it. Many decide it is worth the effort because it protects the most valuable thing the farm owns, the soil.

Questions

1. What is a cover crop?

_____

_____

2. What can happen to bare soil?

_____

_____

3. How do rye roots protect the soil?

_____

_____

4. How do the green leaves help in spring?

_____

_____

5. Why does a farmer turn the rye under before planting?

_____

_____

6. Why do many farmers think a cover crop is worth the cost?

_____

_____

Words to know

cover crop: a plant grown to protect the soil, not to be sold
harvested: picked or cut when the crop is ready
sprouts: begins to grow from a seed
organic matter: rotted plant and animal material in the soil
plow: a farm tool that cuts and turns over the soil

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Winter Rye Covers the Bare Field

Square group

Once the corn has been harvested, a field can appear to be finished for the year. The stalks have been cut and the soil lies bare. Some farmers, however, perform one more task before winter arrives. They scatter the seeds of a cover crop, frequently a grass called rye, that they have no intention of selling.

Bare soil is remarkably easy to lose. Heavy rainfall can carry it downhill, and strong winds can strip away the dry upper layer. Because soil takes an enormously long time to form, losing it is a serious problem for any farm. Rye sprouts quickly in cool weather, and its roots spread through the ground like a net that holds the soil firmly in place.

The green leaves are helpful as well. They shade the ground in spring, which makes it considerably harder for weeds to sprout. Rye can even continue growing slowly through a cold season, when most other plants have stopped.

Before the next crop is planted, the farmer cuts the rye or turns it under with a plow. As the plants decay, they add organic matter to the soil. That material nourishes the tiny creatures living there and helps the ground retain water the way a sponge does.

A cover crop demands both seed and labor, so a farmer must plan ahead. Many conclude that the effort is worthwhile, because it protects the most valuable asset the farm possesses, the soil itself.

Questions

1. What is a cover crop, and why do farmers plant one?

_____

_____

2. What can happen to bare soil in heavy rain or strong wind?

_____

_____

3. How do the roots of rye protect the soil?

_____

_____

4. In what way do the green leaves help in spring?

_____

_____

5. Why does a farmer turn the rye under before the next crop is planted?

_____

_____

6. Why do many farmers conclude that a cover crop is worth the effort?

_____

_____

Words to know

cover crop: a plant grown to protect the soil, not to be sold
harvested: picked or cut when the crop is ready
sprouts: begins to grow from a seed
organic matter: rotted plant and animal material in the soil
plow: a farm tool that cuts and turns over the soil

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Winter Rye Covers the Bare Field

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Winter Rye Covers the Bare Field

Easier · 204 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 1.9

1. A plant grown to protect the field, not to be sold.
2. Rain can wash it downhill and wind can blow it away.
3. They spread like a net and hold the soil in place.
4. They shade the ground, so weeds have a harder time sprouting.
5. As it rots, it adds organic matter that feeds the soil.
6. It protects the soil, the most valuable thing on the farm.

Triangle: Winter Rye Covers the Bare Field

This passage · 223 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 5.5

1. A plant grown to protect the field rather than to be sold.
2. Rain can wash it downhill and wind can blow it away.
3. They spread like a net and hold the soil in place.
4. They shade the ground, so weeds have a harder time sprouting.
5. As it rots, it adds organic matter that feeds the soil.
6. It protects the soil, which is the most valuable thing the farm owns.

Square: Winter Rye Covers the Bare Field

Harder · 240 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 6.4

1. A plant grown to protect the field rather than to be sold.
2. Rain can carry it downhill and wind can strip away the dry upper layer.
3. They spread like a net and hold the soil firmly in place.
4. They shade the ground, which makes it harder for weeds to sprout.
5. As it decays, it adds organic matter that nourishes the soil.
6. It protects the soil, which is the most valuable asset the farm has.